

Cessation / Support for Employees Who Use Tobacco

Facts about Nicotine:

Nicotine is a psychoactive substance, meaning that it is a chemical that alters brain function, resulting in temporary changes in perception, mood, consciousness, or behavior. Nicotine is very rapidly absorbed into the bloodstream, producing almost immediate effects on the brain. When smoked, it can reach the brain in about 8 seconds. Cigarettes are a highly efficient drug delivery system, and the average smoker gets about 1 or 2 mg of nicotine per cigarette.

In products that are either not smoked (chew or snuff) or not inhaled (cigars, pipes, etc), nicotine is absorbed through the mucous membrane of the mouth or nose. This tends to be a slower absorption but nicotine levels can still reach peak levels in the bloodstream. Nicotine can also be absorbed directly through the skin.ⁱ

Facts about Addiction:

Generally, an addiction is a recurring compulsion by an individual to engage in some specific activity, even when faced with negative consequences. The term is often reserved for drug addictions (including tobacco/nicotine) but it is sometimes applied to other scenarios, such as problem gambling and compulsive overeating.

Nicotine addiction is both physical and behavioral, which makes it extremely hard to break the dependence. Physically, the body will go through withdrawal when nicotine levels drop. Behaviorally, the feel, smell, or sight of a tobacco product and the ritual of obtaining, handling, and using that product are all associated with the pleasurable effects of tobacco use. These behaviors can create cravings and can make withdrawal worse.^{i ii}

Facts about Withdrawal:

Withdrawal is related to the absence of the addictive substance, such as nicotine. These symptoms may begin within a few hours of last use, but typically peak within the first few days and begin to subside within a few weeks. Cravings for nicotine may last significantly longer.

The “relaxing” effect that nicotine provides is not due to physical relaxation; rather, it is the elimination of early withdrawal symptoms.ⁱⁱ

Some symptoms of nicotine withdrawal include:

- Irritability
- Cravings
- Poor concentration
- Sleep disturbances
- Increased appetite
- Headache
- Fatigue

Facts about Quitting:

It is important to distinguish between wanting to quit and needing to quit. Most people today know that they need to quit, and are aware of the health effects of tobacco use.

- *Identify reasons you want to quit.* To improve your health, for a loved one, so that you can enjoy playing sports or seeing a grandchild graduate...anything that motivates you. This can remind you why you want to quit.
- *Get support.* Whether from a family member, a friend, or by calling the 1-800-QUIT-NOW, the North Carolina Tobacco Use Quitline, or visiting the website QuitlineNC.com, you can get the support you need to help you quit using tobacco. Success rates are much higher for tobacco users who have multiple forms of support while trying to kick the habit.
- *Make a plan.* Start by setting a quit date and tell your family, friends and co-workers so that they can support you in your attempt to quit using tobacco products. Think about the challenges you will face and how you can handle these challenges.
- *Get rid of the temptation.* Remove all tobacco products from your environment.
- Contact your physician and ask them if nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) is right for you.

Benefits of Quitting:

- 20 minutes after quitting, your heart rate drops.
- 12 hours after quitting, carbon monoxide levels in your blood drops to normal.
- 2 weeks to 3 months after quitting, your heart attack risk begins to drop. Your lung function begins to improve.
- 1 to 9 months after quitting, your coughing and shortness of breath decrease.
- 1 year after quitting, your added risk of coronary heart disease is half that of a smoker's.
- 5 years after quitting, your stroke risk is reduced to that of a nonsmoker's 5 - 15 years after quitting.
- 10 years after quitting, your lung cancer death rate is about half that of a smoker's. Your risk of cancers of the mouth, throat, esophagus, bladder, kidney and pancreas decreases.
- 15 years after quitting, your risk of coronary heart disease is back to that of a nonsmoker's.

Compared to smokers, your...

- Stroke risk is reduced to that of a person who never smoked after 5 to 15 years of not smoking.
- Cancers of the mouth, throat, and esophagus risks are halved 5 years after smoking.
- Cancer of the larynx risk is reduced after quitting.
- Coronary heart disease risk is cut by half 1 year after quitting and is nearly the same as someone who never smoked 15 years after quitting.
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease risk of death is reduced after you quit.
- Lung cancer risk drops by as much as half 10 years after quitting.
- Ulcer risk drops after quitting.
- Bladder cancer risk is halved a few years after quitting.
- Peripheral artery disease goes down after quitting.
- Cervical cancer risk is reduced a few years after quitting.
- Low birthweight baby risk drops to normal if you quit before pregnancy or during your first trimester. ⁱⁱⁱ

Quitting Resources: Supporting Employees that Want to Quit

Call the N.C. Tobacco Use Quitline

1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669)

TTY# 1-877-777-6534

- We are open from 8:00 am until midnight, seven days a week.
- Our services are available to all North Carolinians.
- Our expert Tobacco Quit Coaches can call you back upon request.
- English, Spanish and other languages available.
- All calls are free and confidential.

N.C. Tobacco Use Quitline Brochure

You can print this full color brochure and make it available in waiting rooms, at health fairs, at your church or synagogue - wherever tobacco users visit. This document is in PDF format.

QuitLineNC.com

This is the N.C. Tobacco Use Quitline web page. Click here to listen to people who have successfully quit tobacco using the quitline.

N.C. Good Health Directory

The N.C. Good Health Directory is a county specific directory of statewide resources for tobacco cessation, physical activity and healthy eating.

Smokefree.gov

The National Cancer Institute website provides Instant Messaging cessation counseling as well as printable materials.

TryToStop.org

This website offers a "QUIT Wizard" Program that provides tools, personalized features and a Bulletin Board to give you the support you need to quit or to help someone else quit. Registration is required. Multilingual support and information available.

Quitnet.com

Quitnet.com is an interactive online community that provides smoking cessation support. Registration is required.

ChewFree.com

This site assists people who want to quit using chewing tobacco or snuff. It was developed as part of a research project funded by the National Institutes of Health. Registration is required.

BecomeAnEx

BecomeAnEx.org strives to help you identify your triggers...any time, place, activity or person can trigger your desire to smoke. Once your triggers are identified, BecomeAnEx.org provides resources to teach you how to deal with these urges without smoking. Information is available in English and Spanish.

Freedom from Smoking Online

Freedom from smoking is the American Lung Association's online, web-based smoking cessation program. Registration is required. Information is available in English and Spanish.

ⁱ National Institute on Drug Abuse, InfoFacts: Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products, June 2007
<http://www.drugabuse.gov/Infofacts/Tobacco.html>

ⁱⁱ NIDA, Research Report Series, Tobacco Addiction, July 2006
<http://www.drugabuse.gov/researchreports/nicotine/nicotine.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ Content source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Office on Smoking and Health
Publications available: http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/osh_pub_catalog/PublicationList.aspx